The Henderson Family Tree

ABOUT MY RESEARCH

This story begins with Joseph Henderson who became a sea captain and a notable Sandy Hook pilot in the New York harbor and along the Atlantic Coast during the Civil War. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina on September 9, 1826.

Most of what we know about Joseph Henderson was passed down through family legend, using federal and state census records, and from newspaper stories. There is still some debate as to who Joseph's parents were and how he got to New York. Joseph's grandson, Girard Brown Henderson, wrote in his autobiography the following perspective: "It is alleged by my father and my aunts and uncles that Joseph Henderson was an orphan raised by a mean uncle. He ran away at sixteen to become a cabin boy and changed his name. He retained his given name Joseph, but whatever his family name was he didn't like it and changed it to Henderson."

In 1842, at sixteen years old, Joseph Henderson left Charleston, South Carolina to find passage to New York as a cabin boy on a ship traveling to New York City. By the age of twenty-one, he was captain of his own schooner and a New York and Sandy Hook pilot. This was quite an accomplishment for someone in those days.

Mary A. Lathrop, first wife of Alexander D. Henderson Jr, wrote in her book, Mary's Family Connection, the following account, which was told to her by Jerry Henderson: "that he was raised in the Carolinas by foster parents, running away as a teenager to sea as a cabin boy, and becoming a sea captain at the age of twenty-one."

Joseph's great-grandson, Allen Douglas Henderson, did research into the family history in 1993. He hired a certified genealogist, Brent Holcomb, who reported; "I think that we have a very good case for Alexander Henderson as the father of Joseph Henderson." This statement was based on ship and marriage records. Ship records indicate that a passenger arrived in 1821, at the port of Charleston on the ship 'Jane'. He was "Alexander Henderson, age 21, Male, Laborer, from Liverpool, to inhabit the United States."

The 1825 Charleston City Directory lists Alexander Henderson as living at 84 Queen Street, Charleston, South Carolina. He was also listed as a watchmaker. Marriage records from the St Phillip's Church in Charleston indicate, that Alexander Henderson married Mrs. Jane Eccles on July 18, 1822.

Alexander Henderson died on March 4, 1826. Since Joseph Henderson was born on September 9, 1826, it is possible that he was conceived before his father died. If the connection with Alexander Henderson is correct, Joseph Henderson's ancestry can be traced back to Monaghan, Ireland. Alexander Henderson's tombstone inscription reads: "To the memory of Alexander Henderson a native of Monaghan, Ireland who departed this life on the 4th of March 1826 in the 26th year of his age. He was a loving husband."

According to Joseph's death certificate (No. 15592), he was listed as "born in U.S." as were the birthplaces of his father and his mother. The US Federal Census records and New York newspaper references support the fact that Joseph Henderson and his parents came from South Carolina. The 1880 US Census reports that he, his father, and his mother were all born in South Carolina.

Further research is ongoing. If you have information about our descendents, please pass this information to me at ghend@earthlink.net.

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